Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C00201408

EO 13526 3.5(c)

National Foreign Assessment Center

~~Secret~~

[redacted] 3.5(c)

OCR

CIA/RP/ALA 77-071

Latin America Weekly Review

22 December 1977

~~Secret~~

[redacted] 3.5(c)

22 December 1977

Copy 165

32

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C00201408

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C00201408

3.5(c)

Human Rights Developments

Several Latin American countries have been discussing the traditional holiday season amnesty for internees, but only Honduras has announced that a large number of prisoners will be released.

Argentine authorities appear to have made a major blunder in handling the recent disappearance of 13 human rights demonstrators from the group known as the "Mad Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo." The government has denied that it is responsible and has blamed the kidnaping on the Montonero terrorists. The Montonero involvement has been largely discredited, however, by the fact that the demonstrators were viewed as being opposed to the government and inadvertent allies of the antigovernment forces. In addition, the scope of the abduction operation and the number of witnesses indicate it was not a terrorist act.

Navy Secretary General Admiral Fracassi, has given the US Ambassador in Buenos Aires some insight into the government's deliberations over human rights cases. Fracassi said that the Foreign Ministry has passed to the armed forces a list of 15 cases believed to be of interest to the US, with a view to determining what ameliorative action could be taken on political grounds. Although there is disagreement within the armed forces over what should be done, it is possible that amnesty could be granted in several of the cases, including that of Jacobo Timerman, the editor of *La Opinion*.

The body of a kidnaped Guatemalan businessman was discovered on 14 December. The Council of State has asked President Laugerud to take steps to prevent similar criminal acts. Pressure is mounting on the government from the private sector to take stronger measures, but Laugerud so far is trying to preserve an "open climate" in the pre-electoral period. He did cancel the holiday amnesty, however.

The Chilean Government opened the issue of missing persons to domestic debate last week. The government

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C00201408

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C00201408

announced that it had resolved 1,200 of 1,700 outstanding claims of disappearance. In fact, fewer than 100 persons have been located of the 1,000 listed by the Red Cross. In any case, by its own admission the government is stuck with at least 500 cases still unresolved. The Vicarate of Solidarity and other human rights groups are sure to continue pressing for information on these cases.

The recent outbreak of bombings in Santiago, meanwhile, may serve the government because it lessens the pressure for lowering the state of emergency. The perpetrators of the incidents appear to be terrorists who have been stepping up their activities.

President Pinochet's banishment of six trade union leaders, which looked like a major tactical error last week, has been reversed by the President's decision to return them home by Christmas. Rather than intimidate the labor sector as the President apparently had intended, his action brought some unity to the badly fragmented trade union movement.

Colombia has been hit by a wave of kidnapings and murders that has caused President Lopez to go into seclusion in order to draft a plan to combat the violence. Seven persons were kidnaped last weekend, bringing this year's total to 59. Military officers have issued a statement urging the government to get tough with criminals. 3.5(c)

22 December 1977

Approved for Release: 2018/09/17 C00201408